

what the school is doing and to ensure that the school is aware of community views. It is with such advisory committees that educators often discuss new curriculum guidelines and courses of study.

The community-school advisory committee might also undertake surveys to determine local priorities, interests, and needs in education. Surveys might also reveal untapped resources in the community, including people, places, and things.

The committee members' assistance in the development of educational, cultural, and recreational programs can transform the school into a community learning centre, a skill exchange centre, where opportunities and activities are provided for young and old, for singles and entire families. The committee might also co-ordinate services provided through the community school and other local agencies. Finally, the committee can be a positive influence on the day-to-day curriculum and activities within the school.

#### 5. Community-school co-ordinator

A school board may decide to employ a *community-school co-ordinator*. The co-ordinator can lend support and assistance to principals, teachers, the community-school committee, and citizens in general. He or she can encourage community participation and help determine the school's responses to what the community identifies as its needs.

#### Getting Started

Working toward the achievement of any or all of these objectives can be an exciting and rewarding process – once you get started. But where to begin? The starting point for a good community-school relationship lies in the hands of the people concerned – the principal and teachers of the school, and the parents and other citizens in the community. It cannot be imposed from the outside on any community or school.

Very often it is the principal who sets the tone for the school's relationship with the community – by establishing an open-door policy. However, interested citizens do not have to wait for an invitation.

You and your friends might begin by contacting the principal and asking about a community-school advisory committee. No matter how you get started, it's important to remember two things:

- Experience has shown that it is best to "think small" at the beginning.
- Progress, in community-school relationships, takes time.

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As principals, teachers, parents, and community residents become more experienced in communicating and sharing information and responsibilities, both the quality of education and the quality of community life will be improved.

A thriving community school can only come about as a result of people working together, creating an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding. There is no foolproof formula for success. By their very existence and the relationship they bear to one another, your school and your community hold the potential of a community school. The *promise* is there; it is up to you to make the *reality*.

An informative, illustrated booklet containing actual case histories of community-school projects in Ontario is available free of charge from the Ministry of Education, Communication Services Branch, Mowat Block, 14th Floor, Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1L2. The booklet contains many practical ideas that might be helpful to principals, teachers, parents, and other citizens interested in exploring the possibilities of the community-school concept.

Further information about community schools is available from the nine regional offices of the Ontario Ministry of Education, which are located in the following cities.

Northwestern Ontario:  
Thunder Bay (475-1581)  
Midnorthern Ontario:  
Sudbury (566-3480)  
Northeastern Ontario:  
North Bay (474-7210)  
Western Ontario:  
London (472-1440)  
Midwestern Ontario:  
Waterloo (885-0440)  
Niagara:  
St. Catharines (684-1123)  
Central Ontario:  
Willowdale (Toronto 491-0330)  
Eastern Ontario:  
Kingston (546-2641)  
Ottawa Valley:  
Ottawa (225-2230)



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## The Community and Its School

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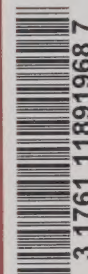
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Public involvement in education has increased sharply in recent years. One major result has been a closer relationship between the community and its school.

Across Ontario, communities are discovering that school buildings really do belong to people of all ages; everyone can benefit from their use.

This growing awareness has given birth in many localities to the *community school* – a “people place” where education and community life are combined for mutual benefit.

There is a new sense of comfort and sharing in the community school. Neighbourhood adults are volunteering to help out with the school program or dropping in to see “what goes on” at the school where their children are being educated; educators, in turn, are welcoming – and, in some cases, actively soliciting – greater community participation in both student programs and evening activities.

One heartening statistic reveals that during 1975 more than 13,000 adult volunteers helped out with student programs that were planned and directed by teachers. Whether they bring a special talent or skill, such as poetry/or macramé or merely patience and understanding, volunteers make a valuable contribution by enriching the learning experience of a specific child or group of children.

Among other benefits, growing community interest has opened important new avenues for real-life education beyond the walls of the classroom. More and more students are given opportunities to experience applied learning in neighbourhood locations – under teacher guidance.

But community-school interaction is a two-way street; so, while teachers and students are tapping the resources of the neighbourhood and venturing beyond the classroom to learn from – and in – their community, the citizens of the community are tapping the resources of the school by putting school facilities to good use at times other than regular school hours.

Most school boards have streamlined procedures for issuing permits to allow greater community use of school facilities for a wide range of activities. Regulations governing the issuance of permits and the charging of rental fees, if any, are set down by your local school board and are available from the board.

For instance, community use of school facilities in one jurisdiction includes the following list of services and activities:

- Recreational use by sports, crafts, theatre, music, and other specific interest groups;
- senior citizens' service – office or “drop-in”;
- legal aid clinic;
- community health or dental clinic;
- community information centre or planning office;
- parent-child program;
- toy-lending library;
- day-care centre or nursery school;
- community kitchen;
- volunteer services;
- service clubs.

With such broad scope, the growth of community schools is being welcomed by citizens from all walks of life.

And yet, although such activities and services are of practical advantage to the entire community, they are not the only valuable benefits of the community school. A sense of understanding and co-operation between school and community is an equally important element in counteracting the growing impersonality of urban life.

And this brings us back to the basic relationship between the community and the school. From the beginning of formal education, schools and institutions of learning have helped to improve the community – to *humanize it* by guarding and reinforcing its values and humanistic ideals. It is these same ideals that underlie the community-school partnership – a partnership dedicated to the idea of a *people-oriented society* in which members of the school community and members of the community at large work together for the benefit of all citizens.

These are some of the general ideas that have inspired – and continue to inspire – the concept of the community school. Now let's look at some specific activities, services, and procedures that have proven successful and that you might like to consider in developing your approach to the community school.

#### **1. Programs or projects that encourage individuals or groups to use their schools and school facilities**

A school board might work toward this end by developing a policy that encourages people from the community to use school facilities and equipment after regular hours. In some schools, facilities and equipment might be made available even during the daytime. Schools with vacant or seldom-used classrooms could provide opportunities for a wide variety of people-oriented activities.

#### **2. Programs or projects that allow and encourage the school to use community resources**

Such programs could give students valuable opportunities to explore and use the resources of the local neighbourhood and the larger community whenever possible and appropriate.

If parents and residents are to feel at home and at ease in the school, then teachers and their students must feel equally at home within their community. The development of community-centred learning requires close co-operation among the school, business, industry, government, the farming community, and municipal and social service groups.

#### **3. Adult volunteers**

As the community-school partnership grows, parents and residents of the community will feel increasingly free to go into the school, to get involved in the learning process, to share their talents and expertise with others, and at the same time expand their own learning.

Members of the community who volunteer to come into the school to work with teachers and students can bring special talents and skills to the school program or an after-school activity. Community involvement in this area can often begin with the formation of a small adult volunteer program in the school.

#### **4. The community-school advisory committee**

More and more communities across the province are establishing this useful link between the community and the school. A committee of this kind is usually composed of residents and educators and may also include representatives from local municipal or public-service organizations. Acting in an advisory capacity, it in no way infringes on the authority of the principal and/or the school board.

One of the main functions of an advisory committee is to improve communication, to tell the community